



Commander's Voice

The Government of Iraq took a historic step on April 22nd when it selected the senior leadership for their first permanent government in the post-Saddam Hussein era. We still have a long way to go before Iraq reaches the level of stability that will allow it to stand on its own, but this is another important step on its road to self-reliance. Iraq's success in reaching this milestone was due, in large part, to the dedication and sacrifice of the Coalition Forces over the past three years and the key to the Coalition's success has been the sustained high performance of our small units and the exceptional leadership provided by our junior NCOs and Officers.

In today's complex, decentralized environment, Coalition small units and individual Service Members are the decisive forces that determine the success of our mission. I am always amazed at the incredible performance of our personnel in the field, but am occasionally reminded that not everyone understands the implications of the actions we sometimes take with the Iraqi people. I'd like to share a part of a message I received recently from a trusted friend who relayed the following comments from an interpreter/translator:

"The translator was venting. He'd been with Coalition troops on a raid. The target, a tribal leader, said to the translator, 'Please, just walk me outside and cuff me there. Don't humiliate me in front of my family. I'll go peacefully.'

The Coalition member listened to the translator, responded with some sort of swearing epithet, grabbed the target and threw him on the floor in front of the man's family, cuffed him and dragged him away."

I can understand in the heat of the moment how

one could be tempted to do exactly what this Coalition member did, but wouldn't it have been just as easy to walk him outside out of sight of his family, cuff him and take him away? Instead, by humiliating a tribal leader in front of his family and possibly his neighbors, we probably created new enemies or hardened the opinions of those who were already suspicious of the Coalition. In either case, we likely took a step back in our efforts to win the trust and confidence of Iraqis and probably increased the threat to our own force protection.

One of the great challenges of operating in this environment is identifying potential second and third order effects of our actions before we take them and adjusting our approach to achieve the same objective without creating more problems for ourselves. This is true at all levels, but especially in small units that have the most direct contact with the Iraqi population. Coalition tactical units are the best in the world, the best-led and the decisive force in our efforts to bring stability and democracy to Iraq. I ask that we use our inherent flexibility to ensure that the actions we take not only accomplish our immediate goals, but support our long term objectives as well. Thanks and keep up the great work!



**MNC-I COMMANDER
LT. GEN. PETER W.
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Spearhead!